



Boys Without Names

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For eleven-year-old Gopal and his family, life in their rural Indian village is over: We stay, we starve, his baba has warned. So they must flee to the big city of Mumbai in hopes of finding work and a brighter future. Gopal is eager to help support his struggling family until school starts, so when a stranger approaches him with the promise of a factory job, he jumps at the offer.

But Gopal has been deceived. There is no factory but, instead, a small, stuffy sweatshop, where he and five other boys are forced to make beaded frames for no money and little food. The boys are forbidden to talk or even to call one another by their real names. In this atmosphere of distrust and isolation, locked in a rundown building in an unknown part of the city, Gopal despairs of ever seeing his family again.

Then, late one night when Gopal decides to share kahanis, or stories, he realizes that storytelling might be the boys' key to holding on to their sense of self and their hope for any kind of future. If he can make them feel more like brothers than enemies, their lives will be more bearable in the shop—and they might even find a way to escape.

Boys Without Names Details

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From Reader Review Boys Without Names for online ebook

Sandra Stiles says

Living in the United States we often forget about the atrocities that go on around the world, such as child labor. Gopal and his family must sneak off in the middle of the night from their tiny village and go to Mumbai. The family has borrowed money and the interest is keeping them in debt. Gopal's uncle has left them traveling money. On the way the family realizes they don't have enough money. The father leaves them on the street alone while he tries to reach his brother's house. He gets lost. Gopal takes the lead and gets his mother and sisters to the uncles house, where the uncle will try to locate their missing father. Gopal wants to help his Uncle and family and he searches for work. He meets a young man who promises him work if they leave right then. Against better judgement he leaves with the boy where he is drugged and taken to live with five other boys making beaded picture frames. Gopal plans his escape as their captor starves and beats them. Gopal looks for the right opportunity to get help for all of them. This was a good book but one that was hard to read. The emotional impact when you realize this stuff still happens today is a bitter pill to swallow. One to recommend to my students.

Julie says

Sometimes I buy books specifically to fit a curricular need. There's a local assignment that requires 5th or 6th grade students to read about contemporary children growing up in a foreign culture. When this ARC arrived in the mail, I pegged it as one to recommend for that assignment.

Fortunately, the book also happens to make compelling reading. I had to know what happened to Gopal, an optimistic, storyteller of a boy whose family is forced by a debt collector from their Indian farming village into Mumbai. Gopal wants to help his family by working, so he accepts what he thinks is a day job in a factory. Instead, Gopal becomes a child slave, imprisoned with 5 other boys in a shack. How they survive and if they will escape, along with the whole outrage of child labor, moves the plot along while also skillfully developing the characters.

I'd have given this 5 stars if only a few changes of heart in the enslaved boys were just a little clearer to me. Overall extremely readable and highly recommended--whether you're assigned it or not.

Adji says

As a part of summer reading, this is one of the two books I read over summer. This is an A-MA-ZING book that I highly recommend reading. This book's protagonist, 11 year-old Gopal, really reminded me that even though you are in a bad position, there is always a way to persevere. I mean this boy was kidnapped for over 3 months, yet he somehow managed to escape which is amazing. Read this book people!! Seriously.. it'll teach you so many things.

Joy Kirr says

Oh, did I want Scar to be punished more than any other character I've ever read about... Gopal's family needs to leave their town without paying their debt, so they flee to Mumbai. While there, they get separated from his father, and so Gopal tries to find work. He gets stolen, instead, and becomes Scar's slave, with five other young boys who won't say a word to each other...

Reader says

My sole difficulty with this book was the fact that it may have caused me to grind my teeth into tiny nubs. Gopal has moved with his family from rural India to an unsanitary and rather packed area of Mumbai with a relative. Having lost his father along the way, Gopal is determined to set out and earn money for the family himself. Unfortunately his intrepid nature sets him up to be a perfect kidnapping object. Next thing he knows he's in a small attic with five other boys, forced to put beads on frames. Gopal retains hope that he can rally the boys together to overthrow their captor, but how do learn to trust others when they won't even tell you their own names? Admittedly, Sheth indulges in some fairly long-winded sections in this book. There were times when I found myself wishing she'd just get on with it and allow Gopal to be kidnapped. Yet the minute he was I was on the edge of my seat. I literally had to flip to the end of the book to make certain he'd be okay. Sheth really makes you care about the characters here, and her storytelling is above par. An unpredictable, fascinating little realistic story. - B

Alexeena says

The subject matter of this novel had great potential. It tells the story of Gopal's family who are forced to flee their village and try to find work in Mumbai, to avoid usurious moneylenders. Whilst the protagonist is likeable, plot action is slow: the first eighty pages, for example, comprises only their trip to the city. Soon after their arrival Gopal is tricked into working in a sweatshop, which highlights the horrendous conditions experienced by children in this situation. At the end, a number of sub-plots are unresolved for the reader and I finished it feeling that it could have been told far more effectively and powerfully in half the number of words. With a front cover mimicking that of 'Trash', I felt this novel didn't deal as well or as engagingly with the issue of child poverty as 'Trash' did - even though the publishers seemed to be attempting to draw a connection between the two texts. A laudable topic but plot elements were a little weak.

JumbleofJargon says

3.5 stars

Aloha fellow reader, just thought I'd save you time in case you're looking for a summary of this enrapturing own-voices novel; you will not find a summary here.

Initially I felt, the writing style didn't seem to match the unknown youthful age of the protagonist, Gopal. However, as the story progressed, the tone and style of Gopal's voice seemed to suit him more. The writing style didn't change. I think I just got to know him better.

In hindsight, I think his tone felt older than it actually was because he's the oldest child in his family.

I am the youngest of 5. In my youth, I was a lot less grounded in reality than I am today. I read a lot and spent most of my time in my imagination; especially during math. As a result, I barely passed middle school Math and I failed to notice a lot of things that were going on in my family. Even now I am only starting to understand events from my childhood that I failed to understand when it was happening. Last week, after reading a novel the following thoughts went through my mind. *"Hey I remember something like this when I was young . . . when the adults were talking and my mind was engrossed in a world where I was less awkward and pretty and socially acceptable and able to harness the power of the sun.* Ultimately, I pieced together something pretty shocking - one of several shocking things I've realized in the past few years.

I think this is why Gopal's voice felt a bit beyond his years. Even his little sister Sita seemed rather precocious for her age. I've concluded that these kids are simply more insightful than I was; less lost in a world that didn't exist. First children tend to have a lot more pressure and responsibility than the ones that come after them. I wonder if my brother had thoughts like Gopal's

At the conclusion of **Boys Without Names** there are bits in the back about the author and about what compelled her to choose this subject content. Although the characters are completely fictional, the things that happened to Gopal actually happen in India. I cannot say much else without spoiling the plot.

Gopal's story is important because it sheds light on a serious problem that is not unique to India.

We walk with Gopal through a narrative that gracefully highlights something important that humans need. The need for humans to have other humans to survive. The need to use our powers of discernment and accept help from strangers. The need to use our powers of discernment to accept help from relatives, neighbors, and friends **who have proved to be worthy of our trust**. The need to not let the past's poor treatment prevent us from accepting help and from hoping.

Sunshinecoast says

At first the story was something where I wasn't sure how all of a sudden he was going to end up as a slave in a factory, when he was with his family for a majority of the book. But it took a turn about half way in and I believe that it was one of the best books that I have ever read.

Tiffany says

My 11yo son & I read this book as part of his 6th grade reading challenge list. We both liked it very much. Dealing with the very real issue of child labor in countries like India, but in a way that is age appropriate, this book is well-written and enjoyable as middle grade literature. Slight spoiler on the ending: it ends in a "happy ending" as much as the subject matter can, and while as an adult it's not quite satisfying and seems a bit canned, for 6th graders it seems age appropriate, like justice has been served.

The only negative my son identified was that he wished he could know a little more after the ending. An epilogue would have been nice.

Debbie McNeil says

This haunting and relevant tale sheds light on children of poverty in the third world. The characters come so alive that when their story is resolved (albeit a bit too quickly), I find myself still thinking about the boys and wondering about their future.

Andrew Munroe says

I got this book a few years ago and didn't pick it up until now and wish I read it earlier. to be honest once I started I figured out what the ending would be like even without reading part of it. It was a fairly decent book and I want to read another book like it.

Zak says

This book was very interesting and introduced you into the lives of six boys who live in India who were beaten and worked without pay, forced to stay in a small building making beaded frames for their boss who kept them there away from their families after kidnapping them. The book is fiction but is based on all the children who are being labored around the world in harsh environments rather than growing up and being with their families. The book took place over a few months from when the main character arrived at the bead factory to when he was liberated by the police along with the five other boys who he had become close friends with while working there, the only way they kept their old selves with them was the power of story telling. The story put into perspective how lucky many kids are who can go to school to get an education and have a good childhood while others are being dehumanized and are slowly dying, working in these disgusting places, and it brings to light the situation going on in the world even today and that these types of things need to be stopped.

Mathis Bailey says

A simple fast read with a whole lot of heart. The premise is about a poor 13 year old Indian boy who gets kidnapped and sold into child labor making picture frames in India. The story is grim and heavy, but reads very quickly. The writing is vivid and tugs on the heart strings. I finished this novel in two sittings... very engaging. You can't help but to root for the protagonist to get out of his dire situation. I would recommend this book if you enjoy books such as Room by Emma Donoghue. I'll give this 3 stars. A good Read.

Maria says

*****SPOILER ALERT*****

Have you ever thought what tomorrow could be like? Gopal didn't think his life would change completely in just one day. The genre of this book is Realistic Fiction because the events that happen in the book might

actually be happening around the world. I thought the novel Boys Without Names was a great book it tells you information about what might be happening to someone around the world, while its making the reader actually stop and think about what tomorrow will be like. I was in shock what a person can do to young innocent people. Anyway I really had fun reading Boys Without Names because I learned some Indian language for example I learned that Aai means mother and Baba means father.

Boys Without Names is about a family that lives in India, and economy had became tight and they lost their crop land and they either had to stay their and starve or flee the country to Mumbai. Gopal's mother was afraid because she didn't want to leave the country without paying their debt, but Gopals father tells her "we stay here we starve" so she agreed to flee to Mumbai. When Gopals family get there Gopals dad decides to go to Gopals uncle house and drive to where they were but days past and he wouldn't return and Gopal got tired of waiting and since they didn't have enough money so Gopal decided to try to get money and once he did the rest of them went to Mumbai to look for Gopals uncles house and when they did they were safer, but Gopal was still worried because his Baba wouldn't appear and he wanted him to come back. Gopals family needed money and without his baba around he thought he should get a job and earn money for his family, and one day he met a boy that tricked him into a factory and Gopal thought that was a great point that he had to earn money and once him and the boy arrived to the factory, Gopal realized there was no factory it was just a shabby old place where there was only a few kids there and they have to work with no breaks and a little food and they cant talk to each other or else they will get a punishment by the owner of the boys. Gopal hopes to run away from there but its hard to escape. The police com and inspects the building and once the police find the kids tied up they arrest the owner and they take the kids back to their parents. The setting is in Mumbai in India where its a place that gets hot and humid. Gopal wants to escape from the stuffy ware shop but the possibilities are to low because the owner locks all the doors and windows when the owner is in the ware-shop and when he isn't so Gopal cant escape and he will have to wait until someone comes. I think the conflict of the novel is Person vs Person because Gopal was tricked into the supposed factory and now that hes been locked in the stuffy warehouse he cant escape and he has to find a way to escape but he has no way out and now he has to wait until the boss lets him go make an errand and try to escape.

Gopal is a young boy that just wants to help his family with money and he is very responsible and polite he helps his mother with chores, he also just wants his baba to come back and he wishes his family could return back to there old village. Naren (boy)and Sita (girl) are twins and they are very young to understand what is happening so when their baba disappears they are heartbroken and they cry because they want their dad to come back. Gopals mother is very brave because when her husband disappears she tries to stay strong for Gopal and even stronger for the twins Naren and Sita,, she tries to stay calm about the situation about baba being gone but she cant hold on to the bravery that much. Gopals uncle lives in Mumbai and he helps his sisters family and he was going to put Gopal, Naren, and Sita in school, and after he told Gopal not to trust strangers and not worry about looking for a job that Gopals uncle would take care of the money issue but of course Gopal didn't listen.

I thought the book was a great book because when you read it it gives you information about around the world for example it tells how India is really like because they need money and now economy has been tight everywhere, but in some places people are starving and some could be dying, and it makes you stop and think how your life is really different and that you should appreciate what you have and what you are because other people would want to have what you are complaining about, for example we might complain about the food we don't like while some other people are starving and would want that food you were complaining about. Next time you want to complain about something you have then maybe just stop and think about the other people who are starving to death. I was surprised when Gopal got tricked into working in a stuffy old warehouse where 5 other boys had to work everyday without getting paid and they would get severely punished if they didn't please the boss and in their punishment was to not get food for a day and

they would get hit by the boss very bad, the boys job was to create a picture frame with different styles. The them of this book that i think is bravery because when Gopal got tricked he had no other choice but to do what the boss ordered him and everyday he dreamed of escaping the warehouse and he never lost faith and he had to be brave for his family, for example when something went wrong in work somebody else messed up the frames and he said he did it when he actually didn't and he had to receive the punishment of not eating, that's why i think that one of the themes was bravery. I was angry when i found out that the guy from the soppose factory was so mean to those poor innocent boys and because stuff like this is/ might be happening in real life and thats sad because how could someone be so mean to a boy who is looking for a job to get paid so he can help his family. I liked the way the author ended the novel by having policeman arrived at the old warehouse and saving those kids was awesome because they didnt deserve to stay there and work their heads of when they received bad treatment, and when i read that Gopal got home and all his family was there even his dad that was a really good thing because i wanted to know if his dad appeared back or not. If I were the author I would have added where Gopals dad has been because now im curious to know what happened to his father while he was lost and gone.

In conclusioin, I thought the book was a really good book because while reading it you are learning about India and Indian language and traditions and to think that alot of stuff from is actually happening in India and many other places. The author of Boys Without Names Kashmira Sheth actually went to India and she wrote a book about her experience. I rate this book a 4 out of 5 because i wanted to know were Gopals dad was, and i wanted to know what was Gopals family doing while Gopal was hone over 3 months but the author didn't do that. I recommend this book to anyone but if you like to learn other peoples traditions and if you would like to learn about India and Indian traditions then this is your book to read next. Next time you might want to think what tomorrow could be like.

Tami says

Author Jacqueline Woodson described this book as “not a heartbreakng story, even if there are moments that break the heart.” This is absolutely true and one of the reasons I would consider this as a read-aloud selection in 3rd or 4th grade.

It tells the story of an 11yr old boy in India whose family has lost their farm and travels to Mumbai looking for jobs that will help sustain them as well as provide education for their children.

Gopal, thinking he has found a job to earn money for his family is instead abducted and locked in a house with 5 other boys. They are forced to make beaded frames and are fed very little and beaten for any behavior their slave owner decides requires it.

The cruelty is very clearly described without being as graphic as, for example, the story of Iqbal. Also, the end of Gopal's story is a happy one, seeing him reunited with his family. For younger readers this is an appropriate choice: the book having introduced them to an important injustice does not then put them in a position of feeling hopeless about it.

It's an extraordinary story, well-written and plotted. It provides much material for discussion and could easily be a springboard for learning about a variety of child labor, Indian social strata, farming economics, etc.

